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CHARLES DICKENS.

A LECTURE

BY

PROFESSOR WARD,

Delivered in the Hulme Town Hall, Manchester, Nov. 30, 1870.

You will, I hope, believe me when I say that I feel half sorry and half glad to have undertaken to speak to you to-night about Charles Dickens: sorry, because I cannot quite suppress a fear lest it may seem presumptuous in one whose name must be strange to nearly all his hearers to address them concerning one whose name is familiar on all their lips; glad, because I feel assured that any attempt to do honour to a great memory must have something in it to commend itself to your sympathies at the very outset. For, indeed, I have no claims to discuss the subject which I have proposed for our consideration but two, and these two of very different value: the one, that there is in this room no more cordial admirer of the genius of the late Mr. Dickens than myself; the other, that my own studies have lain so much among writers of the past, among the works of the few whose fame is still green in the nation which they adorned, and the many whose reputation is to all intents and purposes (like Old Marley in the *Christmas Carol*) as dead as a door-nail, that I often ask myself the question, What is it in the works of the former which ensures to them the highest reward of literary effort—a lasting national popularity? Such an enquiry I will venture to-night to make with regard to the works of one of the most popular writers—probably the most popular writer—of our own generation. And this enquiry, if conducted with something of care, will not, I hope, be wholly without profit. Literary criticism has its uses as well as its

abuses; but there is no cause to shrink from it as a vain expenditure of time. To know the reason why we admire, is a very different thing from studying with a determination not to admire at all. And you will allow me to say that I should not have dared to follow on this platform men who have spoken to you as masters of the sciences with which they have dealt, if I were not convinced that the criticism of a great writer is as worthy an occupation for the mind, and one as capable of being conducted on true principles, and according to a rational method, as scientific enquiry into the wonderful phenomena of physics. I cannot speak with authority, like my predecessors; but I can address myself to my task with as full a consciousness of its importance as that which animates them with regard to theirs.

I shall endeavour, then, to make good this assertion: that the name of Dickens is destined to endure, and that the glorious hope which inspired his lifelong labours was not a delusion.

For, that such a hope inspired him, I can make no doubt whatever. The fame which he sought was not the mere favour of the day, which brings applause and gold; the art to which he devoted himself was not one which desires to be crowned only with wreaths doomed to wither on the morrow of the festival. On the last—the very last—occasion when Mr. Dickens spoke in public, the fact that he and those around him were mourning the loss of a distinguished fellow-artist, and he in particular a dear personal friend, gave to his words a tone of melancholy usually foreign to them. But, as if he had known that he was never again to open his lips before an assemblage of his fellow-countrymen, he closed his brief reference to the death of Mr. Maclise with what might almost without change be at this day spoken in memory of Dickens himself:—"Incapable of a sordid or ignoble thought; gallantly sustaining the true dignity of his vocation, . . no artist, of whatsoever denomination, ever went to his rest leaving a golden memory more pure from dross, or having devoted himself to his art with a truer chivalry." For, as we look back upon the long, and, in one sense, uneventful life which came to so sudden a close last midsummer, there is nothing which strikes and touches us so much in it as this: that it was devoted almost entirely, that it was devoted exclusively and single-mindedly, to the art which ennobled it and made it great. It would be an unjust and impotent objection against this, to say, that because Dickens was from the first—or all but from the first—successful in the line of life which he had chosen, interest pointed the same way as ambition, and ambition the same way as creative impulse. Certainly, in this country of ours the rewards

are neither few nor scant which the public bestows upon literary success. And happily, in our own days, literary merit needs no other patron than the public. No great nineteenth-century poet needs to embitter his existence by "losing good days that might be better spent;" and "wasting long nights in pensive discontent; speeding to-day, to be put back to-morrow; feeding on hope, to pine with fear and sorrow." No nineteenth-century humourist needs to bully the great ones in the realm to stand in awe of him; or, while he lords it over his fellow-writers, to be, to the end of his days, the slave of the booksellers. But while literary success in our days lies in a more straightforward path for literary merit, the temptations of both have increased. Among them is the temptation which it is more difficult perhaps for an Englishman than for the citizen of most other countries to resist—to make his literary honours merely a stepping-stone to a political career and to mere social distinction. The members of more than one popular constituency, during Mr. Dickens's life, were of opinion that his laurel lacked its greenest leaf till he should consent to represent them in Parliament; and there was in certain quarters a chronic murmur, why Charles Dickens had not been made a lord, or at all events a baronet or a privy-councillor. Had Mr. Dickens regarded literature merely as a means to an end, he might probably have contrived to compass one, if not all, of these distinctions; but he regarded literature as the end of his life itself, and by what he accomplished in it he desired to be judged by his contemporaries and by posterity.

The best and most honourable tribute, therefore, that can be paid to his memory, is not, indeed, to forget the man in his works, but in his works to seek out the man. The mere outward circumstances in his life have but a passing interest. The months have flown swiftly since the day of his death; and the time has already gone by when a curiosity lingering over mere outward details was at all events excusable. Naturally enough, at the first moment, when the man himself was still fresh in our remembrance—when the sudden impression of his having been taken away in the midst of an active career was still upon us,—we thought less of his services as a whole than of the details which we could personally recall, or which others could recall for us. We remember, or forget them now, with a better sense of their proportion to that which Dickens's friends and fellow-countrymen have really lost in him.

As for the harmless gossip which attached itself to almost every picture and every piece of pottery belonging to Mr. Dickens—(down to the stuffed raven, who, as we thought, was purchased by

the most fearless of enthusiasts, but who turned out to have been secured by an enterprising photographer)—it naturally enough interested us at the moment. It has vanished from our minds as the pictures have vanished from their familiar walls at Gadshill; with it have gone the details about the amount of Mr. Dickens's personal property; about the way in which he disposed of it; the obscure insinuations as to his opinions on subjects with which the public had no concern; and one or two stray attempts to revive forgotten scandals, which may or may not have rested on misconception, but which it is certainly no man's business to make the subject of common talk.

We all live in hopes that even our own generation may see the life of Dickens really written. The public desires no vamped-up compilation, cheaply got up for a cheap market—if the book be good, it will soon become cheap; we can wait till a competent hand has addressed itself to the task. A good biography, such as Mr. John Forster, one of Dickens's most intimate friends, wrote of Oliver Goldsmith—such as the world hopes he may be induced to write of Charles Dickens himself,—will contain enough detail to leave to posterity a warm and living picture of the man; but will subordinate that detail to the great design, and not dissolve the mighty current of a great career into a numberless sea of petty facts. But while we can wait for such a biography as this, the time has, I think, come for every man who calls himself an admirer of Dickens, and who believes that his children and children's children will honour the name and love the author whom he honours and loves, to enquire into the grounds of this admiration, and of the emotion which it engenders.

It is not, of course, possible to suppose that the unparalleled popularity at present attaching to the name of Dickens will endure in the same degree and in the same extent. In the first instance, what may be termed the *accidents* of his literary effects, will lose in the eyes of posterity the attractiveness which they have possessed for his own age. The time will come when many passages in Dickens will need a commentator; and though we of the teaching class are fond of commentating authors, yet we agree with the larger half of the world in thinking those authors most enjoyable who explain themselves. I take up my edition (the last, I believe) of the book with which I verily believe most Englishmen of the present generation would not object to be sentenced to a moderate term of solitary confinement—of course, I mean the *Pickwick Papers;* and I find its author, in the preface, written many years after its composition, using these expressions:

"I have found it curious and interesting, looking over the sheets of this reprint, to mark what important social improvements have taken place about us, almost imperceptibly, since they were originally written. The licence of counsel, and the degree to which juries are ingeniously bewildered, are yet susceptible of moderation; while an improvement in the mode of conducting Parliamentary elections (and even Parliaments too, perhaps) is still within the bounds of possibility. But legal reforms have pared the claws of Messrs. Dodson and Fogg; a spirit of self-respect, mutual forbearance, education, and co-operation for such good ends, has diffused itself among their clerks; places far apart are brought together, to the present convenience and advantage of the public, and to the certain destruction, in time, of a host of petty jealousies, blindnesses, and prejudices, by which the public alone have always been the sufferers; the laws relating to imprisonment for debt are altered; and the Fleet Prison is pulled down."

"Who knows," he continues, in the same vein, "but by the time the series reaches its conclusion, it may be discovered that there are even magistrates in town and country, who should be taught to shake hands every day with Common-sense and Justice; that even Poor Laws may have mercy on the weak, the aged, and unfortunate; that schools, on the broad principles of Christianity, are the best adornment for the length and breadth of this civilised land."

And so forth, speaking of social changes which he saw in progress around him, and of which—Heaven be praised!—he lived long enough to witness at least the earnest beginning, leading, we may trust, to full accomplishment. So, again, we may look forward to a time when much of the effect of such a book as *Bleak House* will be considerably diminished by the difficulty in understanding its subject. Indeed, I recall an anecdote of the present Lord Chancellor protesting to Mr. Dickens that the court in question was in a fair way to redeem itself from the unpopularity to which he had given so trenchant an expression; and of the author of *Bleak House* receiving the intelligence with pleasure, not unmixed with a shade of incredulity. And in pointing out this probable cause of a future diminution of interest in some of Dickens's most popular works, I am not speaking unadvisedly, for I have heard men of intelligence in our own day exclaim on the impossibility of reading our great novelists of the eighteenth century, because the state of society which they describe is so difficult to understand as to make their ground almost a foreign one to readers of the present generation.

Again, we cannot believe—at least the general course of the history of literature points directly the other way—that the *form* in which Dickens, following the taste of his times perhaps even more than the bent of his own genius, cast his literary creations,

will not at some future time become more or less obsolete. Dickens's fame, of course, rests in the main upon what he did as a writer of *novels*. Now, in whatever form he might have written, the gift of his genius, his all but infinite humour, and his all but inexhaustible imagination, would have shone; but that he became a great *novelist* was due, in some measure at least, to the accident of the literary tastes of the times in which he lived and wrote. I will not, for instance, conceal my own belief, that if he had lived in another epoch, he would have been attracted even more strongly to writing plays than he was in our own days to writing novels. Before I close, I hope to say something on his dramatic powers, which, both in the clear drawing of characters and in the happy invention of situations were extraordinary; and assuredly his love for the stage can have escaped no reader of his works. It was very wide and very enduring. As one who had special opportunities for understanding Dickens's tastes in this direction has pointed out to me, it included entertainers of almost every description. It was because he loved the drama so well that he had so keen an eye for the little absurdities and extravagances of its professors. Who does not remember the immortal Mr. Vincent Crummles, of the Theatre Royal, Portsmouth, the proprietor of the pony with the theatrical education, and of the vehicle of unknown design, in which the manager himself was wont to occupy the front seat, while

"The Master Crummleses and Smike were packed together behind, in company with a wicker basket, defended from wet by a stout oilskin, in which were the hand-swords, pistols, pig-tails, nautical costumes, and other professional necessaries of the aforesaid gentlemen?"

And Mrs. Crummles, who in private life "wore her hair (of which she had a great quantity) braided in a large festoon over each temple;" and Miss Ninetta Crummles, the infant phenomenon, who first appeared before Nicholas Nickleby—

"in a dirty white frock with tucks up to the knees, short trousers, sandaled shoes, white spencer, pink gauze bonnet, green veil, and curl-papers; who turned a pirouette, cut twice in the air, turned another pirouette, then, looking off at the opposite wing, shrieked, bounded forwards to within six inches of the footlights, and fell into a beautiful attitude of terror, as a shabby gentleman in an old pair of buff slippers came in at one powerful slide, and, chattering his teeth, fiercely brandished a walking stick. 'They are going through the Indian Savage and the Maiden,' said Mrs. Crummles."

Of this good-natured fondness for everything connected with the stage, there are many traces in Dickens's works to the last, from the memoirs of the excellent clown, "Joe" Grimaldi, which he took the trouble to edit and make readable, down to the charming occasional papers of his later years, where the description of "Two Views of a Cheap Theatre" is admirably true to nature—or shall I say art?—where the "Christmas Tree Theatricals" form one of the pleasantest accompaniments of the "Christmas Tree;" where, even in the quiet town of Dullborough, the Uncommercial Traveller turns his steps to the theatre, "in which sanctuary he had in his youth come to the knowledge of many wondrous secrets of nature;" and even at the seaside at Pavilionstone there is time to remember the efforts of "poor theatrical managers." Mr. Dickens, as is universally known, was himself a most admirable actor; his performances in private theatricals live in the memory of many, as marvellous for their vigour and vivacity; and we who have seen him only before his reading-desk recall some of his sudden assumptions of character—such as that of the Jew Fagin or old Justice Stareleigh, with a distinctness of impression left upon us by few impersonations on the actual stage. I am not aware whether Mr. Dickens's impersonation was intended as a portrait; it is well known that the character was not without a malicious design of the kind. The original of Mr. Justice Stareleigh seems to have been a model of intelligent obtuseness. Perhaps you have heard of a story illustrating this. He was passing the statue of Canning, then newly erected, opposite the Houses of Parliament, in all the freshness of the verdant hue usually observable in fresh compositions of bronze. "I should think," said the judge, referring to the colossal size of the statue, "that Mr. Canning was not so large as that in life." "No, *nor as green*, was the reply." This strong personal taste would have combined with Mr. Dickens's gifts of genius in a dramatic direction to render him more effective as a playwright than any our later literature has known. As it was, he never wrote anything dramatic except, quite in his early days, a pretty little opera; the taste of the times led him irresistibly to the *novel*.

But is it certain that this taste will continue? Is it certain that the novel, like other forms of literature, will not in time give way to another? There is nothing to exempt it from the fate of all other literary forms; nothing to ensure it an everlasting endurance. I do not mean that in our own time we need look forward to a failure in the supply which at the present day seems endless; or to the demand which seems fully commensurate to it. But it is

probable that the time will come when this particular form of literature will fail to exercise an exceptional attraction; and when that time comes, the great writers who, like Dickens, have adopted it will suffer with the small, for whom neglect is in any case inevitable.

Lastly (if I am not delaying you too long on the threshold), as the years go on, as the true fame of the great men of our own age mellows in their progress, much will be lost of the kind of popularity which they could only possess for the generation to which they belonged. It is with the favourites of an age as with the familiar associates of an individual life. When we recall to our minds those whom we knew well and love dearly, what is it that we affectionately remember and that it gives us constant pleasure to dwell upon? Certainly not always only the merits for which we esteemed and the virtues for which we honoured them. Their little foibles, their tricks and oddities, their familiar extravagances which usage endeared to us, are present to us as so many sunny memories; we cannot think of them without their weaknesses, and their very failings as part of them are endeared to us. But coming generations, our sons and their sons after them, will only esteem the men and women of the past for what they were worth; they have scant piety for those accidents which to us are hardly distinguishable from essentials. And so with a great writer whom his own age has grown to love. Mr. Dickens as an author had, especially in his later works, acquired a manner so distinctly his own, that it frequently fell into what is called *mannerism;* but to his public his faults were often inseparable from his merits; and when our critical consciences told us that he was astray in one of his favourite directions, the severest censure we had for him was that he was growing "more like himself" than ever. But future generations will judge from a different point of view. They will, and they ought, to scan more closely the merits and the demerits of the great writer's manner; and they will be less willing to tolerate what they consider bad for the sake of what they acknowledge as good. And they will also note, more keenly than ourselves, how it was precisely the mannerism of Dickens—*i.e.*, his exaggeration of his peculiarities,—which his followers were able to imitate, and by imitating which they flooded our literature with a mass of writing which *we* enjoyed, more or less, because it was so like Dickens, but for which *they* will have no similar liking. Sydney Smith says somewhere, that he would undertake to teach anybody *wit*—*i.e.*, the kind of wit which can be learned—in a course of six lessons; and some of the imitators of Mr.

Dickens seem to have come by his manner without very much more trouble. But future generations will reject the mannerism in the imitations, and they will not approve it in the great writer himself.

If, then, this be the case, if there is much in the *subject*, in the *form*, in the *manner* of Mr. Dickens's works, which, so far from giving vitality to them, will injuriously affect their fame and popularity, and make them less enjoyable to our successors than they are to ourselves, then surely every lover of Dickens, everyone who believes that his name and his works will endure in our literature, may ask himself the question—What are the *essential elements* of his literary genius? What is that which ensures, as we believe, a life to his works which will exist with the language itself; what is that which is not merely accidental in the popularity which he enjoys now, and on which his fame will rest in ages to come?

May I, without immodesty, attempt in part at least, to answer these questions? For my wish is to give reasons for the conviction which I believe we all share, that the name of Charles Dickens is not a mere waif upon the tossing current of time, but an inheritance which, without shame for having gloried in it ourselves, we may confidently hand down to the generations which shall succeed us.

In Shakspere's tragedy of *Hamlet* there is a very wise critic—wise enough in his own estimation to be able to overlook the circumstance that he is a fool in the opinion of everyone else—by name Polonius, who is all for nice distinctions, and who takes occasion to remind us that the drama is divided into "tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral—pastorical-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, scene undividable or poem unlimited." You would probably think me what Hamlet thought Polonius, if I were to enter into a similar attempt to show what are the several kinds or classes of novels. But I may say this, that the distinction between novels of *character*, novels of *incident*, and novels of *manner*, has in it nothing either unintelligible or far-fetched. Is it not easy, or, indeed, possible, to place every novel absolutely under one or the other of these heads; but it is certain that nearly every novel is in the main of one of these three kinds. In other words, a novel may claim our attention chiefly on account of its story, on account of the skill with which that story is constructed, and of the powerful way in which the events of which it tells are brought forward and put together. That is the novel of *incident*—the novel which engages our interest on account of its plot. It is a kind which has never lost its popularity, from the days of *Robinson Crusoe* down to the days of *The Woman in White*;

for I suppose I may count among my hearers some who have, like myself, had their souls harrowed, and their night's rest disturbed by that awesome tale. Again, a novel may interest us chiefly on account of its *descriptive power*, by reason of the faithful accuracy with which it pourtrays the life and ways of men either of our own day or of any period of the past, either of our own country or of some foreign land. That is the novel of *manners*—the novel in which our English writers of the last century have excelled, perhaps, all other schools; and of which Smollett, who so faithfully describes the manners of people who, in one sense certainly, had no manners at all, is perhaps the foremost representative. Lastly, there is the novel which chiefly directs itself to trace the differences, to delineate the growth, and to illustrate the passions and humours of particular types of men and women. That is the novel of *character*, which some think the highest kind of all—of which our literature boasts many masters, and our own age not a few worthy to rank high in our literature. Now it is very rare to find a novel which is *exclusively* of one or the other of these classes, and a novelist who has not attempted to shine in them all, but there are not many novels which are successful in the attempt, and there are, as I have already said, very few novelists indeed who have been masters of all three.

The great writer of whom we are speaking, was not equally gifted by nature in every one of these directions. The novel of *incident* requires what rarely comes by nature, great artistic skill of a peculiar kind; experience teaches much, but cannot wholly supply, the defects of nature. Mr. Dickens knew that he was comparatively weak in this direction; and he accordingly here applied himself with the most visible effort to learn by experience and by example; but effort, when it is perceived, diminishes the effect, and, to some extent, spoils the enjoyment of any work of art or literature.

Let us dwell for a moment on this point. It is not quite fair to judge a writer by his earliest writings, even if they be the most popular of any which he has produced. Thus a serious injustice is often—involuntarily, no doubt—done to the *artistic* merits of Mr. Dickens by taking the immortal *Pickwick Papers* as the text-book for judging of his writings as a whole. In some ways he never surpassed this early effort; but, from the point of view under which we are at present considering it, it was crude and imperfect; and could not, indeed, in the nature of the case, be otherwise. For the *Pickwick Papers* as is well known, were not at first intended to be a novel at all; but grew out of a series

of sketches originally intended to accompany a series of comic prints illustrating the adventures of Cockney sportsmen. When a plot has no beginning it cannot have a middle, and it only has an end because every book has a last page, just as even the worst tragedy has a last scene, in which, as a matter of course, all the bad characters are killed off, and all the good married off. For the same reason, when an author starts without any clear idea of a character, he cannot carry that character out consistently through his story; accordingly, our friend Mr. Pickwick, in the earlier part of the book, is a ridiculous old donkey, and in the later part a benevolent old gentleman, frequently as shrewd as he is benevolent. Sam Weller, on the other hand, comes on the stage comparatively late; he is the author's own creation, and he is perfect from first to last—from his first appearance in the inn-yard, intent upon the illustration of eleven pair of boots—

"Eleven pair o' boots, and one shoe as b'longs to Number Six, with the wooden leg. The eleven boots is to be called at half-past eight, and the shoe at nine. Who's Number Twenty-two, that's to put all the others out? No, no! Reg'lar rotation, as Jack Ketch said when he tied the men up: sorry to keep you a-waitin', sir; but I'll attend to you directly."—

Through his relations as an ardent lover to Mary, a fatherly son to old Mr. Weller, an unwilling step-son to the "widder," a deadly foe to the Shepherd, and a servant and protector to Mr. Pickwick, down to his final confession of faith:

"If you vant a more polished sort of feller, vell and good—have him; but vages or no vages, notice or no notice, board or no board, lodgin' or no lodgin', Sam Veller, as you took from the old inn in the Borough, sticks by you, come what come may; and let ev'rythin' and ev'rybody do their wery fiercest, nothing shall ever perwent it."

But in general, as a novel of character, and still more so as a novel of incident, the *Pickwick Papers* will not stand any severe test; and the nature of their origin forbids our applying it to them.

No sooner, however, had Mr. Dickens undertaken the composition of a regular work, conceived from the first and constructed as an organic whole, than he began to display an unmistakable anxiety, which seems not to have abandoned him to the last, adequately to perform that part of the novelist's task, which lies not only in the invention, but also in the judicious and artistic arrangement of incidents. Compared with his other powers, his power of *construction*, however, remained his weak point to the last, though he endeavoured to make good a natural defect by unabated and unwearying labour. As a constructor of plots, he grew more

elaborate and artificial as he went on, but not, I think, more effective and artistic. *Oliver Twist*, the first of his novels, is simply and powerfully put together; in *Nicholas Nickleby*, the interest in the story is already fainter; in the *Old Curiosity Shop* the original thread is flung aside altogether, and the story itself totters to its end almost as feebly as the old man whom Little Nell led through the country lanes. *Martin Chuzzlewit* is quite improbable; and the visit to America, an inimitable episode in itself, is simply foisted into the general action; *David Copperfield*, poor boy, gets into his troubles for no particular reason, and gets out of them as easily as he gets into them. In his later works, Mr Dickens, perhaps under the influence of Mr. Wilkie Collins's example, attempted plots of extreme intricacy. Indeed, he seems almost to hint as much in the preface to his *Tale of Two Cities*, of which he informs us he first conceived the main idea when he was acting with his friends and children in Mr. Wilkie Collins's drama of the *Frozen Deep;* yet the tale itself is one of the very few of Mr. Dickens's works which require an effort in the perusal. The master of humour and pathos, the magician whose potent wand, if ever so gently moved, exercises effects which no one is able to resist, seems to be toiling in the mechanician's workshop, and yet never attains to a success beyond that of a more or less promising apprentice. To take only his last two works, is there any man not blessed with the experience of a detective policeman, who could furnish an intelligible account of the plot of *Our Mutual Friend.* And if he is at times obscure when in the end he of course means to be clear, he is elsewhere transparent where he intends to be secret. Have you read the *Mystery of Edwin Drood*, which, alas! its author was not himself to unravel. We have lost much by its sudden interruption; but not the key to the mystery. I certainly do not flatter myself with being more than ordinarily acute in penetrating such problems; but after reading the very first number of that work I told a lady who was beginning it that it would be no mystery to her, and she found it out at once.

If Dickens was never destined to attain to high distinction as a constructor of plots, the wonderful fertility of his imagination, and the marvellous dramatic sense which he in so many ways displayed, could hardly fail to make him eminent as an inventor of *situations.* I need hardly point out the distinction; it is in a word, the distinction between the devising of effective scenes, and the combining of effective scenes into a harmonious whole. Nor need I from the wealth of instances which at once crowd into the memory,

select more than one or two instances in illustration. Do you remember, in that beautiful work *David Copperfield*, the novel of Charles Dickens's own heart, which it is not wonderful that many should have thought a reflection of much in his personal experience, the shipwreck on the Yarmouth Sands :

"The wreck, even to my unpractised eye, was breaking up. I saw that she was parting in the middle, and that the life of the solitary man upon the mast hung by a thread. Still he clung to it. He had a singular red cap on, not like a sailor's cap, but of a finer colour ; and as the few yielding planks between him and destruction rolled and bulged, and his anticipative death-knell rung, he was seen by all of us to wave it. I saw him do it now, and thought I was going distracted, when his action brought an old remembrance to my mind of a once dear friend.

"Ham watched the sea, standing alone, with the silence of suspended breath behind him, and the storm before, until there was a great retiring wave, when, with a backward glance at those who held the rope which was made fast round his body, he dashed in after it, and in a moment was buffeting with the water—rising with the hills, falling with the valleys, lost beneath the foam, then drawn again to land. They hauled in hastily.

"He was hurt. I saw blood on his face, from where I stood , but he took no thought of that. He seemed hurriedly to give them some directions for leaving him more free—or so I judged from the motion of his arm—and was gone as before.

"And now he made for the wreck, rising with the hills, falling with the valleys, lost beneath the rugged foam, borne in towards the shore, borne on towards the ship, striving hard and valiantly. The distance was nothing, but the power of the sea and wind made the strife deadly. At length he neared the wreck. He was so near that with one more of his vigorous strokes he would be clinging to it, when a high, green, vast hill-side of water, moving on shoreward from beyond the ship, he seemed to leap up into it with a mighty bound, and the ship was gone !

"Some eddying fragments I saw in the sea, as if a mere cask had been broken, in running to the spot where they were hauling in. Consternation was in every face. They drew him to my very feet—insensible—dead. He was carried to the nearest house, and no one preventing me now, I remained near him, busy, while every means of restoration were tried ; but he had been beaten to death by the great wave, and his generous heart was stilled for ever.

"As I sat beside the bed, when hope was abandoned, and all was done, a fisherman, who had known me when Emily and I were children, and ever since, whispered my name at the door.

"'Sir,' said he, with tears starting to his weather-beaten face, which with his trembling lips were ashy pale, 'will you come over yonder ?'

"The old remembrance that had been recalled to me was in his look. I asked him, terror-stricken, leaning on the arm he held out to support me :—

"'Has a body come ashore?'

"He said, 'Yes.'

"'Do I know it?' I asked then.

"He answered nothing.

"But he led me to the shore, and on that part of it where she and I had looked for shells, two children—on that part of it where some lighter fragments of the old boat, blown down last night, had been scattered by the wind—among the ruins of the home he had wronged—I saw him lying with his head upon his arm, as I had often seen him lie at school."

And do you recall a scene of a most opposite description—steeped in holy calm instead of the strife of the elements; this, too, a death-bed scene, but in place of the waves of the furious ocean, the tranquillity of an ancient village:—

"Waving them off with his hand, and calling softly to her as he went, he stole into the room. They who were left behind drew close together, and after a few whispered words—not unbroken by emotion, or easily uttered—followed him. They moved so gently that their footsteps made no noise; but there were sobs from among the group, and sounds of grief and mourning.

"For she was dead. There, upon her little bed, she lay at rest. The solemn stillness was no marvel now.

"She was dead. No sleep so beautiful and calm, so free from trace of pain, so fair to look upon. She seemed a creature fresh from the hand of God, and waiting for the breath of life; not one who had lived and suffered death.

"Her couch was dressed with here and there some winter berries and green leaves, gathered in a spot she had been used to favour. 'When I die, put near me something that has loved the light, and had the sky above it always.' Those were her words.

"She was dead. Dear, gentle, patient, noble Nell was dead. Her little bird—a poor, slight thing, the pressure of a finger would have crushed—was stirring nimbly in its cage; and the strong heart of its child-mistress was mute and motionless for ever.

"Where were the traces of her early cares, her sufferings and fatigues? All gone. Sorrow was dead indeed in her, but peace and perfect happiness were born; imaged in her tranquil beauty and profound repose.

"And still her former self lay there, unaltered in this change. Yes. The old fireside had smiled upon that same sweet face; it had passed, like a dream, through haunts of misery and care; at the door of the poor schoolmaster on the summer evening, before the furnace fire upon the cold wet night, at the still bed-side of the dying boy, there had been the same mild lovely look. So shall we know the angels in their majesty after death.

"The old man held one languid arm in his, and had the small hand tight folded to his breast, for warmth. It was the hand she had stretched out to him with her last smile—the hand that had led him on, through all their wanderings. Ever and anon he pressed it to his lips; then

hugged it to his breast again, murmuring that it was warmer now; and, as he said it, he looked, in agony, to those who stood around, as if imploring them to help her.

"She was dead, and past all help, or need of it. The ancient rooms she had seemed to fill with life, even while her own was waning fast—the garden she had tended—the eyes she had gladdened—the noiseless haunts of many a thoughtful hour—the paths she had trodden as it were but yesterday—could know her never more.

"'It is not,' said the schoolmaster, as he bent down to kiss her on the cheek, and gave his tears free vent, 'it is not on earth that Heaven's justice ends. Think what earth is, compared with the world to which her young spirit has winged its early flight; and say, if one deliberate wish expressed in solemn terms above this bed could call her back to life, which of us would utter it?'"

These scenes, and many others as perfect in other ways, both in effect and in conception, occur in novels which, in construction, leave much to be desired; a proof of a fact on which you will, I am sure, not desire me to dwell any longer; that of two kindred merits Dickens possessed one in an extraordinary, the other only in a comparatively inferior degree.

We pass to another, perhaps the most important aspect of his literary workmanship. As a novelist of *character*, Dickens works, as all but the very greatest of human writers work, within a limited range, but within this range he excels. Indeed, I do not know why I should make any exception whatsover; for even in the case of Shakspere himself there are limits to that sympathy which is the parent of humour, which again is the creator of characters. For humour has been well defined as the power of understanding, and appreciating the tastes, the prejudices, the likes and dislikes, in a word the *humours* of others; the power to understand and reproduce "those various inclinations which nature gives to ages, sexes, nations," and to cast over them that veil of sympathy which shows us the likeness of men in their unlikeness; so that, while, to quote the same poet—

> "Whate'er custom has impos'd on men,
> Or ill got habit which deforms them so,
> That scarce a brother or his brother know,
> Is represented"—

men learn beneath the diversity of mankind to read the lesson of its brotherhood. But none of us, even those gifted with the most marvellous insight into character, can understand every man in his humour; and if Dickens therefore moves within a restricted range, it is only because genius itself is not, which only impotent flattery proclaims it to be, omniscient.

In his works we therefore find an extraordinary, but not an absolutely exhaustive, variety of character-studies. I wish to speak rather of what we find, than of what we do not find there; and I will not therefore dwell on the absence of certain types which it is strange to find all but unrepresented in the works of the most popular of modern English writers. A simple reference will suffice to the fact, that he never gives us the character which to the minds of most modern Englishmen is the most acceptable type of human worth—the man of public spirit; that he never draws the positive to the negative which he so constantly satirises, the Bounderbies who burlesque civic virtue and the people "with a small p," who in the Circumlocution Office, and elsewhere, condescend to misgovern us. Again, it is remarkable that he who beyond all question was conscious of the infinite value of a single-minded devotion to the claims of art, who was ready to recognise its elevating influence in others, and to sacrifice to it all secondary views in his own career, should never have essayed the portrait of an artist devoted to art for its own sake alone.

The reason of this seems to be, that Mr. Dickens's artistic sympathy was limited to other types of virtue—types which I may possibly allow myself to call those of the private or domestic kind. His sympathy with the affections of the hearth and the home knows no bounds, and it is within this sphere that I confess I know of no other writer—in poetry or prose, amongst ourselves or other nations—to compare to him. Where shall I begin and where end in speaking of this side of his genius? Who ever understood children better than he? Other writers have wondered at them; he understands them,—the romance of their fun, the fun of their romance, the nonsense in their ideas, and the ideas in their nonsense. It was only the other day that I heard him read, in the Free Trade Hall, a portion of one of his best Christmas serials—*Boots at the Holly Tree Inn*—it is called—a story of baby love which would have drawn smiles and tears from Mr. Gradgrind, and which, as I am here to testify, was recognised on the spot as absolutely true to nature by a mother in the gallery, whose sympathy I thought at the time would be too much for Mr. Dickens himself. Who could picture better than he that curious animal, the British boy? Why, he understood him in every phase and under every aspect of his existence, whether he was the pupil of Dr. Blimber's classical academy or of Mr. Fagin's establishment of technical education. Who, again, fathomed more profoundly that sea whose dimples so often deceive us as to its depth, the mind of a young girl? Again and again he has drawn

that character in various types, inspiring in turns compassion, love, reverence—from poor little Dora, who could not keep her Davy's house in order, but who could hold his pens for him when her clever boy was writing his clever books, to Agnes in the same story, the guardian angel of his better self; and, again, in the same story, little Emily, so sweet and so fragile; and he has repeated it with never-ending freshness and truth, down to his very last unfinished tale, where Rosebud, who would not kiss Eddy because her lips were sticky, was to be the heroine of a tale of womans' faithfulness to the end.

But society, we know, is not made up of boys and girls; and in Mr. Dickens's characters of men and women we must seek for his most sustained efforts. Here again he moves within certain bounds. The effects of passion upon character he has very generally preferred to depict on the background of domestic life. The types which he chiefly delights in reproducing are accordingly those with which most of us have opportunities enough of comparing ourselves and our neighbours—our neighbours in particular, as the late Mr. Thackeray would have observed. Avarice and prodigality, pride and humility, utter hypocrisy and a gushing openness to the influence of the moment, philanthropy and misanthropy equally unbounded in degree. Jonas Chuzzlewit and Richard Carstone, Mr. Dombey and Tom Pinch, Pecksniff and Micawber, the Brothers Cheeryble and Quilp, are only among the illustrations which start most readily to every mind, but each of which might be multiplied, in many cases multiplied almost a hundred fold, from the works of the same author. Now, if we consider these types, we shall, I think, find the reason of Mr. Dickens's predilection for the representation of them. They are the favourite growths of our own age and our own country. England is a wealthy land, and as one in which there are great extremes of wealth and poverty, is prolific both of misers and spendthrifts, for there is so much money to get, and there are so many ways of spending it, that the temptation to the developement of either kind of character is peculiarly strong among us. As an old, as well as a rich country, England is specially favourable to the growth of pride of all kinds; and the humility which has its root in the conviction that a man's duty lies in the station of life to which Providence has called him, is in itself, in part, at least due to the fixed order of classes which has taken root among us. As a professedly, and in some of its classes, traditionally religious community, setting a high value upon the maintenance of forms which are accounted among the best safeguards of the

meaning which underlies them, we are frequently exposed on the one hand to see the forms assumed without the contents, and on the other peculiarly sensitive to that recklessness of all restraint which, in certain kinds of mind, is the natural reaction against any vigorous outward code of law. And, as in active exertion at least we are the most philanthropic of nations, so we have always numbered among us an excessive proportion of eccentrics tending towards the other extreme; universal benevolence jostling as it were in the streets with sullen spleen. If this be so, it will not be difficult to discern why Dickens should not only perpetually dwell upon these types, but should generally present them in a form highly coloured and intensely marked. Let me take only a single example. *Hypocrisy* is a vice so in vogue among us, it is so inevitable a product of the greatest movement that ever pervaded our people—the Puritan movement—that English literature teems with representations of it from the days of Queen Elizabeth downwards; from the days of Ben Jonson's Volpone and Sheridan's Joseph Surface to those of Mr. Chadband, whose unctuous countenance appeared to shine with the light of Terewth, but was in reality only greasy from the continuous consumption of muffins, and the 'umblest of the 'umble, Uriah Heep. Dickens alone has furnished a whole gallery of English hypocrites; and in no class of characters has he been at once more faithful to nature, and more careful of avoiding offence to the true while gibbetting the false. The masterpiece among them all is Mr. Pecksniff, all virtue and shirt-collar, that "most exemplary man, fuller of virtuous precept than a copy-book," whom his enemies likened "to a direction-post, which is always telling the way to a place, and never goes there." What is so perfect about Mr. Pecksniff is his consistency: this is the mark of the consummate hypocrite, who beginning by deceiving others with a purpose, ends by keeping up the practice within his four walls, before his own children, and almost to himself, till his hypocrisy becomes part of his being. Such an one was Mr. Pecksniff, architect and surveyor, "of whose architectural doings nothing was clearly known, except that he had never designed or built anything; but it was generally understood that his knowledge of the science was almost awful in its profundity;" but who might certainly be said to be "a land surveyor on a large scale, as an extensive prospect lay stretched out before the windows of his house." Mr. Pecksniff was so successful because neither out in the wicked world, nor at home with his daughters, Cherry and Merry, as they were fondly called for Charity and Mercy, was he ever forgetful of his cue; nothing,

from a piece of cold-blooded villany to a bowl of hot punch, could take the hypocrisy out of him; when he turned his most faithful friend and servant out of his house, he waved his hands in an attitude of blessing on the doorstep, and when he was so drunk that his friends who had put him to bed could not keep him there, he fluttered on the landing, calling upon those below: "My friends! let us improve our minds by mental enquiry and discussion. Let us be moral. Let us contemplate existence."

There was admirable artistic taste, as well as moral truth, in the way in which Mr. Dickens contrasted the hateful vice of hypocrisy with the virtue which he most excelled in describing—that of simplicity, own sister to truthfulness, honesty, and neighbourly goodwill. Mr. Dickens was never happier than when dwelling upon such characters as Tom Pinch, or Trotty Veck, or Martha Peggotty; here pathos and humour, which are, I think, but different forms of the same thing, were indissolubly blended. And he never erred by treating his characters in that patronising way which other humourists have adopted: he never condescended to them, never exhibited them to his readers with a benevolent smile of patronage. Still less, I may take this opportunity of adding, was he likely to fall into that absurd fashion which is observable in some popular novelists of the present day, who stand, or pretend to stand, outside their own creations, who apostrophise their characters with a "Villain, why didst thou mar the peace of that innocent family," or "Scoundrel, why didst thou bring thy father's grey hairs with sorrow to the grave"—to which the villain or scoundrel in question, had they the opportunity of a reply, might fairly make answer: "Then, why did you make me do it?" No, Dickens lives *with* and *in* his characters; he neither plays with them, nor with the effect which they produce.

But I fear I must dwell no longer on this, the most remarkable aspect of our great humourist's genius, otherwise I should have liked to say something about the utterly odd and eccentric characters which he of late in particular loved to introduce into his works. With all the humour which they display—I am thinking of such characters as Mr. Quilp, the diabolic dwarf, and Miss Mowcher, the benevolent pygmy, and a hundred more—with all their fidelity to nature in her grotesque vagaries (for I believe they are the ablest *copies* of all), they are studies of individuals only, not of whole classes of men and women, and therefore less interesting to us. I should have liked, too, to have dwelt on Dickens's pictures of the human mind in its decay, and to have contrasted them with the more terrible but hardly more true

characters of mad folk drawn by Shakspere himself. But I must pass on, for I have yet a few words to say on the third and last head of my general subject.

As a novelist of *manners* Dickens is, in his own sphere, without an equal. In this direction he had his earliest successes; and in this direction his hand never lost its cunning. Even before *Pickwick* was written, the *Sketches by Boz*, had shown that the life of our middle and lower classes, and more especially the middle and lower classes of that great city where it displays itself in the most multitudinous variety, of London, was the chosen sphere for his inimitably faithful observation and inimitably faithful reproduction. In *Pickwick* he never left this ground; in *Oliver Twist* he explored some of its darkest passages, and was able to represent them at once with truth and with good taste. In *Nicholas Nickleby* he for the first time ventured upon sketching the manners and customs of what were intended not of course as types of the aristocracy, but *in manners and customs* were supposed to be faithful portraitures. This attempt he afterwards repeated in *Dombey and Son*, in *Bleak House*, in *Our Mutual Friend*, and elsewhere; but he never succeeded in producing anything but caricatures. Why this should have been so, I will not pretend to determine; that it was so, is my deliberate opinion. Even in the *Mystery of Edwin Drood* he seems, accidentally no doubt, to enter into competition with a very popular novelist of the present day, Mr. Anthony Trollope, as a describer of clerical life. I don't pretend to know in what way Deans and Canons talk when they are at home; but I will venture to say they don't talk in the way Mr. Dickens seems to suppose. The truth is that there were limits which Dickens could not pass with safety: there is nothing to be said on the subject except that those limits in his case included a variety which is in one sense infinite. To a wonderful natural power, he added the most constant habits of observation. It is known that he spent a certain time of every day in walks, whether in the country or in London. Thus he came to know not only the streets and the highroads, but their denizens and their wanderers, as it were by heart. And I have heard that when he undertook to describe any class of manners peculiar and out of the way, be never failed to devote a special study to it. In his stirring tale of *Hard Times*, the terrible earnestness of the narrative is relieved by the oddities of Mr. Sleary, the proprietor of a circus, and of his colleagues. It is said that the wonderful naturalness of these details was the result of a repeated actual study of the manners and costumes not only in the ring, but outside

t, of that peculiar profession. In his last story, the *Mystery of Edwin Drood*, he describes with terrible accuracy, the force of which is in no small measure due to its completeness, the habits of the opium smokers in the slums of Rotherhithe. It is said here, too, the habit of personal observation had gained him a knowledge of a population whose very existence was unknown to most of his fellow countrymen. But passing to more familiar scenes, what can equal his descriptive power with regard to a wide variety of classes of men and their surroundings. If there be among my hearers any who are unacquainted with the delightful papers of the *Uncommercial Traveller* let them turn to them as a proof how Dickens had studied, and how well he knew the England, merry and not merry, of our own day. To him the tramp, whom we pass without notice in the street, was a living reality; he could classify him with as much accuracy as the army list classifies a soldier of a particular branch of the service; and in the hostelry where he paused for refreshment, the landlady and the waiter were unconsciously standing for their photographs.

This power of observation and description extended from human life to the brute creaton, and again to inanimate objects of every kind and description. An American friend of his has published a letter in which describing his return home to England in 1868, he thus describes his reception—by his dogs:

"As you ask me about the dogs, I will begin with them. The two Newfoundland dogs coming to meet me, with the usual carriage and the usual driver, and beholding me coming in my usual dress out of the usual door, it struck me that their recollection of my having been absent for any unusual time was at once cancelled. They behaved (they are both young dogs) exactly in their usual manner; running behind the basket phæton as we trotted along, and lifting their heads to have their ears pulled—a special attention which they receive from no one else. But when I drove into the stable-yard, Linda (the St. Bernard) was greatly excited, weeping profusely, and throwing herself on her back that she might caress my foot with her great fore-paws. M'S. little dog too, Mrs. Bouncer, barked in the greatest agitation, on being called down and asked 'who is this?' tearing round and round me like the dog in the Faust outlines."

And as with men and animals, so with inanimate nature and scenery, his power of observation was keenest at home. I do not know whether there is any Londoner among my hearers; if there be, he will agree with me that the Thames is for ever associated in the mind of a reader of Dickens with his pictures of it from Chelsea to Sheerness. I shall never forget how that river has on many occasions recalled passages from his works to my mind;

above all, how one morning, at break of dawn, finding myself by accident in an out-of-the-way corner among the wharves by the river side, and wondering what gave so familiar an aspect to the strange surroundings, I remembered I had seen the odd picture before in Dickens. His sketches of foreign lands—both of men and scenes—are far inferior, though I am aware of exceptions; and for no other reason than this, that Dickens's descriptive power was the fruit of his humour, and that his humour sprang, as all humour springs, from sympathy.

But it is time for me to draw to a conclusion. I have left much unsaid that I would have added, could I have ventured to trespass further on your patience; but I must say one thing more before I close. I have not thought it necessary to vindicate before you the right of the novel to be considered a form of literature equal, in the hands of a master, to any other. What seems more to the purpose is to ask the question, to what has Dickens owed the mastery which he obtained over it? He owed it in no small degree to the patient and indefatigable study which he devoted to his art—to its materials as well as to its conditions. Of his studies of life I have already spoken. There never was a writer less ostentatious of his reading; but I can see in his works many traces of the fact that he read much, and chiefly good books; and we have it on undoubted testimony that in writing he worked conscientiously and hard. He owed it to the style which he perfected—I say perfected, for if in his later works he was sometimes artificial in manner, in his earliest he was comparatively rough. But primarily, and above all, he owed it to that gift of genius which no toil can secure, though neglect may fritter it away, or abuse pervert. For Dickens possessed an imagination unsurpassed, not only in vividness, but in swiftness. I have intentionally avoided all needless comparisons of his works with those of other writers of his time, some of whom have gone before him to their rest, while others survive to gladden the dulness and relieve the monotony of our daily life. But in the power of his imagination—of this I am convinced—he surpassed them, one and all. That imagination could call up at will those associations which, could we but summon them in their full number, would bind together the human family, and make that expression no longer a name, but a living reality. The oldest man has in his heart a corner where he is still a child; the youngest child has in his soul intimations of the impulses which, were he a man, would produce some of those actions which make up the history of human life. The veriest dullard, even he whose reason totters on the verge of imbecility, or lies encrusted in the slime of ignorance, at times

atches a glimpse of the better existence in advance of him; and he man and woman whom we in our weak despair call lost, at imes look back to the purer and brighter moments they have left ehind them. Such associations as these sympathy alone can varm into life, and imagination alone can at times discern. The reat humourist reveals them to everyone of us; and his genius s indeed an inspiration from no human source, in that it enables im to render this service to the brotherhood of mankind

But more than this. So marvellously has this earth become—vhat assuredly Providence destined it to become—the inheritance f mankind, that there is not a thing upon it, animate or inanimate, vith which, or with the likeness of which, man's mind has not come nto contact; least of all an object which the hands of men have runed or changed in substance or in aspect; with which human eelings, human aspirations, human thoughts, have not acquired n endless variety of single or subtle associations. The houses in he streets, the church tower in the distance, the bells in the hurch tower, the chimes of those bells at morning and at vening, the room at home, the board spread for the meal, the ettle singing and the cricket chirping on the hearth, the sun hining, the wind blowing, the waggons rumbling, the trains hrieking outside, all the sights and all the voices of the day and of he night,—they are to none of us sights and noises wholly without neanings, without memories, without associations. These asso-iations also, which we imperfectly divine or carelessly pass by, he imagination of genius distinctly reveals to us, and powerfully mpresses upon us. Where they appeal directly to the emotions f the heart, it is the power of *pathos* which has awakened them; nd where the suddenness, the unexpectedness, the apparent ddity of the one by the side of the other, strike the mind with rresistible force, it is the equally divine gift of *humour* which has ouched the spring of laughter by the side of the spring of tears.

This is the power wielded by an imagination like that of the reat genius of whom we have spoken to-night. Do we then owe im nothing beyond many pleasant hours which have refreshed us fter our day's toil, and the memory of those hours which makes s long to return to the spell of the kindly enchanter? We owe im much more than this; for he who has made human nature nd its surroundings speak to us, and claim our sympathy for that o which we should have otherwise remained half deaf and half lind, has multiplied the richness of our existence, and has enabled s to hear with his ears and see with his eyes what our own were oo dull to hear and to see.

Modestly, as becomes a man speaking of the labour of his life, Charles Dickens once summed up the spirit of his endeavours in these words: "I felt an earnest and humble desire, and shall do till I die, to increase the stock of harmless cheerfulness. I felt that the world was not utterly to be despised; that it was worthy of living in for years." Yes, this is the task which he set himself, and the task which, by God's blessing, it was given to him to perform. I have no right to judge of the moral purpose which underlay his efforts; but I and you, and every reader of Dickens, is justified in estimating the effects of what he has actually done. Genius can accomplish many things: it can inspire to great deeds, it can fire the soul of a nation, it can wing the ambition of the young, it can transform hope into resolve, it can brighten despondency and gild even decay. The genius of Dickens was not incapable of some of these tasks, nor inactive in some of these directions. But its own bent was to a different end: that of making men feel their brotherhood, and recognise in human life those elements which among a thousand diversities of character and manners, are common to us all. This is why he deserved well of his country and of his kind. And thus we bid farewell to the memory which we have dwelt upon to-night; but a farewell which is to be followed, I trust, by many meetings with him, on the part of all of us, in those creations which he has left behind him. Will you allow me to end with words which are none the less valuable to me because they were spoken by a dear friend who was, as a boy, familiar with Charles Dickens himself, and which are none the less appropriate because they were originally spoken in a sacred place:

"It has been the common remark during the past week [the week following upon Dickens's death], that the loss of this writer has affected society in a way quite peculiar; that everyone who knew his works—and who does not—has felt a shock of pain, as if a personal tie between himself and a near and dear friend had been suddenly snapped. And the fact is strange and full of instruction. The hundred distinct characters which his imagination created, and which are as real to us as if they walked in flesh and blood, remain. They have not died with him. We do not mourn for *them*. He made us laugh and weep when he willed; but that power has been wielded by many an inferior man. No! He made us more tolerant and charitable and hopeful; he helped to keep the heart of society tender and impressible; he loved women and children, and the poor; he loathed the bigot and the fanatic, but never sneered at those who taught humbly and unobtrusively the message of religion; and thus he won a place in the hearts of all who spoke his tongue; and how firmly he had become rooted there, was known to many for the first time when they learned that his work was done."

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Extracts from Sir William M. James' Judgment.

On December 14th, the Vice-Chancellor delivered judgment.

Amongst other things the Vice-Chancellor said: "Every question o literary piracy is a question, as they would say in Westminster Hall, for a jury, and I apprehend that a jury would receive some such direction as this: 'Take the two books into your hand; weigh all the circumstances connected with the defendant's work, and then ask yourself this question —Is any material and substantial part of the defendant's work a transcript of the plaintiffs' work, with colourable additions and colourable variations, and without any honest and real literary labour bestowed by the defendant in the composition of it, as an original literary work? If so, it is piracy.' *I have taken the two books into my hands accordingly, and I have given myself that direction.* . . . . . .

"*And a comparison merely of the two works enables me at once to dispose of a great part of the plaintiffs' case. A mere inspection of the pages of the defendant's book, from which passages are alleged to have been taken, satisfies me that, with regard to all that part of the defendant's book under the heads of 'Heat' and 'Light,' any suggestion of literary piracy is entirely out of the question.* You cannot, as it appears to me, sustain a charge of literary piracy where *you have to track passages and lines through hundreds of pages of the one work, to find those passages and lines tesselated through hundreds of pages in the other.*" . . . . . .

"*The defendant's counsel, however, has gone through the works question by question, fact by fact, and he has satisfied me.*" . . . . . .

"*In many cases—in the majority of cases, in fact—which are charged as piracy, the things I find in the defendant's book were taken from the other books which have been produced before me.* And upon this it is not immaterial to observe that part of the plaintiffs' case is this: it is 'that though there *is a difference in language between your book and my book, that difference in language is only part of the fraud of which you have been guilty. You stole my work, and you disguised it in order to conceal the theft.' In many cases the very words which were alleged to have been so fraudulently varied, have been traced to my satisfaction to the other books which have been produced; and every case of that kind not only fails, but, in my judgment, recoils with destructive effect upon the whole of the plaintiffs' case.*"

. . . . . "*It goes far to show that the defendant, was really, honestly, and substantially applying himself, as he might do, to the various sources of information before him for the purpose of enabling him to produce his work. In truth, the explanation that was given by the defendant's counsel of these facts was so strong, was so conclusive, that the plaintiffs' counsel in reply was driven to allege,*" &c., &c.

. . . . . "*I am satisfied, also, there is a great deal in the defendant's book which shows the substantial labour in adding to that which is found in the plaintiffs' book, in Wells's book, and in 'The Reason Why.'*"

. . . . . "*I am satisfied the defendant's book was not taken from the plaintiffs' book at all.*"

Speaking of the least distance at which an echo can be heard, the Vice-Chancellor, in reference to the "Class-Book," said: "*A very material and very important scientific fact, which I find no trace of in the plaintiffs' work at all. That satisfies me even upon that part that he was not stealing the plaintiffs' book.*" . . . . . .

"*He*" (the defendant's author) "*must have used a considerable amount of literary labour.*" . . . . . "*My verdict as a judge is, that the plaintiffs have failed to prove that the defendant's authors have been guilty of the literary larceny with which they have been charged, and that being so, the plaintiffs' Bill must be dismissed, and DISMISSED WITH COSTS.*"

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The London *Times'* report (Dec. 15th) in the Cause *Jarrold v. Heywood*, has the following on the Judgment of Vice-Chancellor Sir W. M. James. "His Honour said . . . . . he was satisfied that . . . . . the defendant's authors had *bestowed substantial labour and given independent thought and research, with a considerable amount of literary merit, in adding to that which was to be found in the plaintiffs' and other works of the same character.*"

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